

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended): A method of producing a vehicle mat comprising the steps of:

providing a sheet of thermoplastic material, said sheet having a first and second side, said second side having a plurality of nibs extending therefrom;

placing said sheet ~~in contact with~~ directly over a contoured molding tool having one or more sidewalls that extend upwardly from a flat base and a top surface, said first side directed toward said sidewall and top surface of said tool and said second side directed away from said tool;

heating said sheet ~~at least partially simultaneously with said sheet being in contact with said contoured molding tool~~; and

drawing said heated sheet toward said tool until said sheet is substantially shaped to the contour of said sidewall and said top surface of said tool.

2. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein said thermoplastic material is a thermoplastic elastomer.

3. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein said sheet is drawn toward said tool by differential pressure.

4. (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein at least one vacuum aperture is formed in said tool, and wherein said sheet is drawn toward said tool by applying vacuum pressure through said vacuum aperture.

5. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein said tool is a male tool.

6. (Cancelled).

7. (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein said sheet is a blank for producing at least one mat.

8. (Original): The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of cooling said sheet and removing said sheet from said tool.

9. (Currently amended): A method of producing a plastic vehicle mat comprising the steps of:

extruding a sheet of thermoplastic material between a pair of rollers wherein one of said rollers has a plurality of indentions to form nibs on a first side of the sheet;

placing said sheet ~~in contact with~~ directly over a contoured male molding tool having one or more sidewalls that extend upwardly from a flat base and a top surface, said first side directed away from said tool;

heating said sheet to a plastic state ~~at least partially simultaneously with said sheet being in contact with said contoured molding tool~~; and

drawing said heated sheet toward said tool until said sheet is substantially shaped to the contour of said sidewall and said top surface of said tool.

10. (Original): The method of claim 9, wherein said thermoplastic material is a thermoplastic elastomer.

11. (Original): The method of claim 10, wherein said thermoplastic elastomer is a blend of a linear low density polyethylene and thermoplastic elastomers.

12. (Original): The method of claim 9, wherein said sheet is drawn toward said tool by vacuum pressure.

13. (Currently amended): A method of producing a part comprising the steps of:

providing a sheet of thermoplastic material, said sheet having a first and second side, said second side having a plurality of nibs extending therefrom;

placing said sheet ~~in contact with~~ directly over a contoured molding tool having one or more sidewalls that extend upwardly from a flat base and a top surface, said first side directed toward said sidewall and top surface of said tool and said second side directed away from said tool;

heating said sheet ~~at least partially simultaneously with said sheet being in contact with said contoured molding tool~~; and

drawing said heated sheet toward said tool until said sheet is substantially shaped to the contour of said sidewall and said top surface of said tool.

14. (Original): The method of claim 13, wherein said thermoplastic material is a thermoplastic elastomer.

15. (Original): The method of claim 13, wherein said thermoplastic material is a blend of a linear low density polyethylene and a thermoplastic elastomer.

16. (Original): The method of claim 13, wherein said sheet is drawn toward said tool by differential pressure.

17. (Original): The method of claim 13, wherein said vacuum pressure is applied through vacuum apertures in said tool.

18. (Original): The method of claim 13, wherein said tool is a male tool.

19. (Cancelled).

20. (Original): The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of cooling said sheet and removing said sheet from said tool.

21. (Cancelled).

22. (Cancelled).

23. (New): The method of claim 1, wherein the steps of heating said sheet and drawing said heated sheet toward said tool are performed within an oven.